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STATE OF PREPARATION OF THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: SYMPOSIA, SEMINARS AND WORKING GROUPS

Seminar on the Ethical and Spiritual Dimensions of Social Progress

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development, in its decision 2/2 adopted at its second session, took note of the activities carried out by the Secretariat in the context of the preparation of the Summit and encouraged all the organizations concerned to pursue their initiatives, including through symposia, seminars and working groups.

2. The Seminar on the Ethical and Spiritual Dimensions of Social Progress was organized by the secretariat of the Social Summit. Financed by voluntary contributions from the Governments of Austria, France and Switzerland, the Seminar was hosted by the Government of Slovenia. It was held in Bled from 28 to 30 October 1994. The Secretary-General expresses his gratitude to the Governments concerned. The report on the Seminar, prepared by the Secretariat, is contained in the annex to this note.

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Annex

Seminar on the Ethical and Spiritual Dimensions of Social Progress

Bled, Slovenia, 28-30 October 1994

I. Background and intentions

1. The Seminar was organized in the context of the preparation of the World Summit for Social Development, or Social Summit, which will be held in Copenhagen in March 1995. Pursuant to a decision taken by the United Nations General Assembly, this Summit is to consider three main themes: poverty, employment and social integration. A draft Declaration and draft Programme of Action will be submitted to the heads of State and Government meeting in Copenhagen.

2. The idea of a seminar on the ethical and spiritual dimensions of social progress arose informally during the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Social Summit held in New York in February 1994. The main document submitted to the Committee noted that the dominant model of development raises questions and concerns and that, where rights are no longer balanced by obligations and guided by responsibilities, where the search for individual satisfaction is promoted as an end in itself and where the pursuit of personal or group identity takes place at the expense of others, there is a moral crisis at the individual level and an ethical crisis at the societal level. Some delegations referred to the need for an international code of ethics to mould relations between individuals, groups and nations and to limit the various forms of corruption and violence. Others stressed that development, whether of individuals or societies, has spiritual dimensions as well as material and political ones. Some non-governmental organizations stated that they were working for a Social Summit centred on the values of compassion and solidarity with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

3. One way of responding to these concerns and demands for enrichment of the discourse on the Social Summit was to organize a discussion of the philosophy which underlies or should motivate the efforts of the international community to alleviate poverty, create jobs and promote social integration or cohesion. Financed by contributions from the Governments of Austria, France and Switzerland and hosted by the Government of Slovenia, this Seminar in Bled had as its objective to: clarify the ethical and spiritual dimensions of the Summit's three central themes; identify the moral values common to all cultures and religions which could constitute the basis of social progress and the core of the message which the Copenhagen Summit could provide to the world; pave the way for a more holistic perception of international cooperation on social issues; and encourage, now and in the future and at all levels, exchanges and debates concerning the concepts and values which enable societies to function.

4. For this Seminar and this report, the "ethical" relates to the formation and articulation of moral precepts and rules of conduct. Ethics and moral philosophy at the individual level and ethics and political philosophy at the

societal level are regarded as synonyms. The "spiritual" is that which belongs to the realm of the spirit, that which is spirit, that which emanates from a higher principle, divine or, in any case, immaterial and all-encompassing. The ethical and the spiritual are regarded as complementary, in fact, indivisible. An ethic which is not motivated by the spirit, by an enriching and all-encompassing principle - for example, Reason, Love, Harmony or Perfection - is merely a legal code. A spirituality which is not embodied in an ethic is purely abstract. The choice of these two concepts, the ethical and the spiritual, for the title of this Seminar rests on the notion that the cancer which seems to be gnawing at many societies must be analysed and defeated at the level of values and works of the spirit, and that culture and moral standards - and, of course, morality - must be shaped by philosophical reflection.

5. Invited in their personal capacity, the 35 people who met in Bled had four items on their agenda:

- The spirit of the time and the objectives of the Social Summit;
- Human dignity as the central value for political action;
- Self-interest and the common good; and
- Enriching the discourse which proposes solutions to the three central themes of the Social Summit.

Prior to summarizing the ideas put forth during the Seminar under these four headings, it is useful to indicate the working assumptions which the participants agreed to accept, with nuances.

II. Working assumptions

6. Societies, our world and its evolution are shaped and guided by ideas and values.

This initial working assumption is philosophically opposed to all forms of determinism, ancient and modern. Neither Providence nor technology decides our future. Chance, the weight of previous decisions, as well as and especially today's decisions, anchored in perceptions, emotions and cultures, drive and shape human history. The goods and techniques which tend to dominate contemporary cultures are products of the human genius. Mankind has choices and the Social Summit offers an opportunity to discuss some of these choices.

7. The spiritual is an integral part of reality and there is continuity between the material and the spiritual for both individuals and society.

In addition to differing from a dualist philosophy, this second working assumption suggests that the things which encumber our world are neither good nor bad in themselves, but that they acquire meaning and value from the spirit which mankind invests in their creation and use. The same can be said for social institutions and forms of political organization. This presence of the spirit also means that compassion, altruism, generosity and whatever is

universally, if tentatively, recognized as partaking of human goodness have the power to move societies in positive directions. This is an assumption which has always been central to religions and has often been expressed in the literary works of most cultures. Conversely, fear, despair, selfishness, arrogance and the will to dominate others lead to violence, alienation and the decline of human communities and civilizations.

8. Social progress requires the combined efforts of all actors, from individuals to the State and international organizations.

The power to influence the course of human affairs and the organization of societies is not - and never has been completely - in the hands of governments and public authorities. It is shared by other institutions, such as the family, various associations, enterprises and the media. Nowadays regional and international institutions, public and private, also play a growing role. Individuals themselves, through both their participation in the adoption and implementation of decisions which concern the community and the way in which they perceive and experience their human condition, improve or damage the social fabric. The development or regression of societies is the concern of all. Nevertheless, those institutions and individuals who have the intellectual and political power to influence the course of history have special responsibilities and obligations.

9. Social progress or regression is always possible, and there is no perfectly harmonious and perfectly stable human society.

The attempts made, especially during this twentieth century, to create societies and forms of organization of power intended to meet all human needs have been reflected in oppression and terror and have culminated in tragic errors. Doctrines and practices based on the supremacy and superiority of one race or nation have entailed indescribable suffering and have contaminated minds. Noble utopias of solidarity and fraternity have been appropriated by lawless dictators. Moreover, the assaults on the environment, weapons of mass destruction and some scientific developments which pave the way for experimentation on the human body have created a vague but pernicious culture of insecurity and uncertainty as to the survival of humanity. At the same time, to preserve everything out of fear of the future is clearly neither desirable nor feasible. Change is a basic characteristic of individuals and institutions. Individuals and societies alike need aspirations, ideals and dreams. The Copenhagen Summit is being held at a time in history when utopias arouse legitimate distrust, when the notion of a single, planned model of development or social progress has lost credibility and legitimacy and when, just as strongly, humanity needs to control and guide its destiny.

10. At the end of this twentieth century, there is a dominant perception of the characteristics of individual success and happiness and of what constitutes a good society.

Apart from issues of distribution of military, political and economic power in the contemporary world, this final working assumption rests on the well-worn observation that the great shifts and amalgamations of this era, combined with the massive and unprecedented material successes of Western civilization, have

created some elements of a universal culture centred on the acquisition of goods and services which render daily life easier and more comfortable, as well as on the notions of free choice and instant satisfaction of needs. With many nuances in different national communities and different social groups, there is now indeed a common culture based on the search for material well-being, the consumption of goods, images and information, and the pursuit of both self-interest and national interests. The values of efficiency and competition are also prominent in this way of thinking, which is often perceived as a "model", in the normative sense, and which dominates contemporary societies.

III. The spirit of the time and the objectives of the Social Summit

11. The rationale for the Social Summit is that there are persistent problems of underdevelopment and poverty which affect a majority of mankind and that problems - new or stated in new terms - are emerging in the areas of employment, social exclusion and disintegration of the social fabric. The latter problems have not bypassed those regions of the world which enjoy a high material standard of living. The specific objectives of the Summit involve ideas and policies which should make it possible to recover hope in the possibility of progress for humanity. The spirit of the time is a whole, vague in its outlines but often precise in its components, which represents a kind of average opinion of the average citizen of a country typical of contemporary civilization. Made up of ideas and convictions, prejudices and impressions, judgements and information, the spirit of the time naturally reflects the dominant culture, as well as the assessments made of that culture. Apart from exceptional cases belonging to the realm of artistic or scientific creation, the spirit of the time strongly permeates individual and collective decisions. While malleable, it constitutes a kind of ideology which penetrates minds and behaviour. New ideas and innovative policies are those which modify the spirit of the time.

12. Some features of the spirit of the time are obstacles to social progress. Three are mentioned here: the cult of money, the cult of performance and the cult of instant satisfaction. Other feature of the spirit of the time, such as the emphasis on individual freedom and freedom of enterprise, and the demand for participation, information and democracy, facilitate social progress.

13. The cult of money threatens mankind and its future.

Money is at the heart and core of the dominant culture and is the main driving force of contemporary societies. It is coveted because it permits higher levels of consumption and acquisition, because it is a source of power and prestige. It has invaded domains in which it did not previously control behaviours and dreams. In industrialized societies, there are very few human and institutional relationships left which are not dominated by money. At least two manifestations of this monetary imperialism directly threaten the future of modern societies.

(i) The first of these threats is the invasion of science by money.

Science and the scientific culture require exchange, verification, transparency and generosity. The scientist strives to discover and to innovate in order to extend the limits of knowledge. In a religious and spiritual sense, he participates in the work of creation. This work cannot be controlled, cannot be the object of speculation and profit. Science and its fruits cannot be owned without being perverted. When political power or financial power take hold of science and scientists, the scientific spirit vanishes as it is put to the service of power and money. Then science and technologies become dangerous for mankind. This is true today of the immense possibilities for profit - particularly through the sale of medicines - that lie in the commercialization of advances in fields such as biology or genetics. Discoveries are prompted by the desire for gain and are exploited financially instead of being shared with the scientific community before they enter the common heritage of mankind. There is a veritable gold rush for scientific patents. The relationship between science and its technological applications is perverted by money. This phenomenon is all the more serious in that modern science now has enormous power to influence life and death, and the way in which human beings perceive their identity and the universe around them. The results of scientific activity cannot, without enormous dangers for everyone, be motivated by profit and become the property of one individual, group or nation.

(ii) The second, more diffuse, threat is corruption, by money, of social institutions and relations.

The worship of money - which is one of the many forms of worship ravaging the modern world - lies at the basis of the many forms of corruption which seem to afflict most societies. There is corruption when private or public enterprises obtain contracts for work needed by the community through payments or other favours granted to employees or elected officials. There is corruption when services which are in short supply are distributed on the basis of criteria which are neither objective nor transparent; when access - to a school, a hospital or any public service - is secured through pressure or influence; when the investor cannot gain access to a market or a territory without payments and gifts to various public or intermediary authorities; when the rich and powerful avoid taxation or other forms of solidarity and collective responsibility. There is also corruption of the entire social fabric when the strong impose their will on the weak by enticing them with rewards, or when those who have the power to impart information do so not because that is what their sense of responsibility and conscience dictates, but because it will benefit them or their companies. The various manifestations of corruption in the modern world, which increasingly are appearing in organized forms at the level of nations or of the world, are a cancer in our societies. It affects those who corrupt, those who are corrupted and society as a whole. When political power or a public service is corrupted, it loses its legitimacy and violence follows. When private institutions and citizens themselves believe that corruption - whether spectacular or mundane - is part of social life and is, in fact, "normal" or "inevitable", society and civilization are in mortal danger. An ethic that distinguishes between true and false, good and bad, and a culture that ensures the predominance of what is true and good in ideas and behaviours is essential, not only for social progress, but also for a community's survival.

14. The cult of performance is incompatible with social harmony.

The production of goods, carried out to support life and continue creation, and also trade, a source of enrichment for human beings, call for initiative and concern for competence. The desire to "excel", that is, to go beyond the physical, intellectual and moral limits that common sense would seem to dictate, lies at the basis of human endeavour, from sports feats to the spiritual quest. However, concern about doing well economically can lead to worship of growth and economic performance, while the desire to go beyond one's limits can lead to extreme forms of competition and rejection of the weak. Moreover, an awareness of the purpose of the quest to improve performance is clearly essential in order to make a positive or negative assessment of its results. The dominant culture strongly favours individual and collective performance. Competition, economic and social, is often seen as a value in itself. It has been said that post-Renaissance western culture has created an aggressive and promethean human type. Certain forms of social Darwinism and environmental destruction are linked to this aggressiveness and to the cult of performance.

(i) Social Darwinism leads to contempt for, and exclusion of, most of mankind.

"Social Darwinism" exists when a philosophy of linear evolution and "natural" selection through the capacity to adapt to the environment and history is applied to societies, groups and individuals. Those who cannot keep up with development or "progress", who cannot "adapt" or "adjust" their modes of action and thought to the dominant norm, to the prevailing criteria of what constitutes an acceptable performance, are doomed to disappear. "Overtaken" by rapid and relentless evolution, they must, at worst, be eliminated - as in the case of certain professions - or, at best, be protected - as in the case of the unemployed in industrialized societies - and at all events forgotten as far as possible. Most of the philosophical assumptions underlying the concepts and ideologies of development draw from this social Darwinism, which itself was, in part, a legacy of the scientistic doctrines of the end of the nineteenth century in Europe. Along with high priority accorded to economic growth, this culture of performance, efficiency and adaptation marginalizes an increasing number of individuals, social groups and national communities. This culture, which also has egalitarian and democratic roots, does not aim to exclude. On the contrary, the objectives that are loudly and earnestly proclaimed are equality of opportunity, participation and social integration. The problem, and the crack into which all the weak and excluded fall, is that the logic of competition draws societies into an endless spiral. The "rules of the game", presented and experienced as requirements of competition, are constantly scaled up, and neither universal education, ongoing training nor technical assistance can enable everyone to adapt and be integrated. By definition, competition implies that there will be winners and losers. Indeed, the greater the demands made on individuals or groups - in terms of technical knowledge and above all in terms of psychological and cultural mobility - the greater the risk that only a minority will be able to "perform".

(ii) Economic performance, as defined today, is an obstacle to environmental protection.

Human beings are not only social, but also part of their physical environment, which is both natural and man-made. The same Promethean philosophy, deriving from a concept of Man as master of the universe, has resulted in extensive damage to the planet and destruction of its wealth. In addition to the dangers which this situation presents for the survival of mankind, it demonstrates a lack of respect for the environment which is related to the various forms of violence afflicting contemporary societies. Moreover, a culture which destroys in order to build itself up is also a culture of the precarious and the insignificant. Very few adults alive today can recognize the places in which they spent their childhood. The pace of change is exhilarating and a source of anguish. If societies are to be more harmonious, there must be more peaceful and caring relationships between mankind and the universe. There is a secular humanism in existence which damages the individual's relationship with himself, nature and the divine.

15. The cult of instant satisfaction impedes the search for a common and shared future.

(i) The dominant culture is one of impatience.

The way individuals behave suggests that there is a great hunger for gratification of all kinds which can be neither delayed nor denied. Fear of frustration, the use of this concept as justification for satisfying every need and fancy, reveals a hedonism which is perhaps the most salient characteristic of industrial civilizations based on mass production and built-in obsolescence. Detachment is not considered a virtue and renunciation is regarded with suspicion, as denoting a lack of interest in life. This culture of total and instantaneous participation has no place for patience, prudence and the future. The desire to hand down possessions and modes of thought and conduct to the younger and future generations is considerably weakened by concentration on the present and fear of the future. A sense of the transitory nature of all things imbues the modern soul.

(ii) Goals and their rapid achievement are considered more important than the process itself.

Policies, declarations, strategies and social development plans, at both the national and international levels, place great emphasis on the formulation of goals, if possible quantitative and sometimes within specific time-frames. This trend, which no doubt began in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century and reached a peak with the five-year and annual plans of centrally planned and more or less authoritarian economies, seeks to mobilize resources, energy and sometimes imagination in support of goals which are easily understood by everyone. The drawback is that because of this emphasis on goals, which are presented as achievable and as a source of well-being for all, political processes, institutions and how they operate and the social and individual behaviours, which in fact constitute the essence and the reality of social development, tend to remain in the background. When combined with the prevailing culture and political calculation, the cult of performance and the

cult of instant satisfaction make it difficult to sustain the constant and patient efforts that are needed for development and social progress. Self-indulgence destroys individual balance and social harmony.

(iii) In difficult and crisis situations, the most effective policies and investments are often sacrificed.

History provides us with examples of bold though initially costly social reforms which were implemented during periods of crisis and shortage. This was done in a number of regions after the Second World War. Today, some societies which are incomparable political and economic circumstances prefer to attend to priorities - as perceived by the political authorities and opinion polls - at the expense of such fields as education and scientific research, which are vital to the future. When all seems lost or in jeopardy, it is the universities which must be preserved and encouraged. And yet the short-term "now" culture, the culture of instant gratification - often the product of fear - proposes more attractive policies which are actually harmful.

16. The spirit of the time is also characterized by an emphasis on individual freedom and free enterprise, which are sources of social progress.

(i) Standards of living rise when the greatest number of individuals are engaged in enterprise and innovation.

The emphasis which the dominant culture places on individual freedom to promote production and trade has been and continues to be the main engine of social change and modernization. Since the age of the Enlightenment, modernization has been conceived as resting on the market economy, political democracy and individualism. It has resulted in spectacular transformations of material living conditions in all parts of the world. With increasingly efficient and rapid tools and means of information, needs are multiplying and it is becoming possible to satisfy them.

(ii) The various aspects of freedom must progress in harmony.

Free enterprise goes hand in hand with political freedom. Economic freedom cannot be complete without freedom of thought and the freedom to criticize. The freedom to criticize is purely individual outside the context of freedom of movement, exchange and association. The constantly changing balance between the various spaces of freedom calls for clear and acknowledged laws and a shared culture. Laws and regulations are necessary, not only because human beings are imperfect but also because life in society requires that there be rules of the game and an arbitrator. A common culture is also necessary in order to ensure that the exercise of multiple individual freedoms does not lead to the fragmentation of society. Today in certain parts of the world where political and social structures have been radically transformed, the lack of harmonious progression between freedoms, laws and culture is leading to corruption, criminality, violence and the risk of social disintegration.

(iii) Fundamental freedoms and civil and political rights represent a basic achievement of humanity.

The twentieth century has been marked - and continues to be marked every day - by inconceivable acts of barbarism. Humanity as a whole is harmed and humiliated when an individual's basic rights to life and physical and moral integrity are violated. Humanity is in danger of extinction when attacks on the rights of the human person are considered "tolerable", "normal" or "inevitable". When absolute evil becomes commonplace and is accepted out of cowardice or stupidity, civilization disintegrates. In the face of such barbarism and such indifference, a philosophy of human rights and a body of legal instruments have been elaborated. This philosophy, based on freedom and human dignity, is the main bastion against the abuse of power in all its forms.

(iv) Individual freedom is meaningless and is dangerous when not rooted in an ethic and enlightened by the spirit.

Most religions and some moral philosophies have traditionally subscribed to the hypothesis that every person who is sound of mind has an inner voice - or conscience, or reason - that enables him to distinguish unequivocally between good and evil and, in moral terms, between true and false. This inner voice was viewed as independent of the laws of the State and independent of external pressures. Exercising freedom meant obeying the dictates of one's conscience - or not obeying them. In fact, in certain religions and metaphysics, a person attains true freedom only if be obeys his conscience. Nihilism and certain forms of existentialism in the twentieth century have plucked freedom from its roots and severed its fundamental ties with responsibility and love of others. Alienated, individual freedom could bring about the destruction of civilizations. The need for a new ethic and spirituality drawn from the well-springs of all the great religions and philosophies arises, in particular, from the need to restore this link between freedom and responsibility.

17. The demand for participation, information and democracy is a positive aspect of the spirit of the time.

For a great many reasons, including access to education, the betterment of standards of living, the dissemination of information on the successes of certain societies and the failures of other societies, the dominant culture of our time insists on the participation of individuals and groups in the life of the society. Such participation remains difficult, at times stifled and often superficial, but it is clear that civil society has become a vital actor on the social stage. Here, the spirit of the time and the goals of the Copenhagen Summit are in harmony. This is particulary true as regards the elimination of all legal and cultural obstacles to equality between women and men. In order for the participation of citizens in the functioning of societies to acquire its full meaning and realize its full potential, certain conditions must obviously be met. The content, motives and manifestations of power must be reassessed. Extending power to all in its perverse and selfish forms will merely aggravate the problems of our societies. Participation and democracy imply respect for oneself and for others, a sense of responsibility and moderation in judgement and action.

IV. Human dignity as the central value for political action

18. What is human dignity? In terms of moral philosophy, human dignity requires an ennoblement of the soul, an opportunity to give affection and show deference, a sense of self-worth and of the value of others, and a sense of the value of every task to be performed in the human community, such value being measured not in pecuniary terms but rather in the satisfaction derived from having contributed to universal harmony. Human dignity can be defined as the fundamental goodness inherent in every human being; the very nature of the human being as created by God; the central and inevitable core of the person; an inalienable right given to all by the mere fact of existing; the source of life itself; the origin of self-respect and respect for others; and the very essence of the relationship between the being, nature and the divine. The common denominator among all these different concepts of human dignity is that they view it as the most essential and most basic quality of the human being.

Moreover:

(i) Human dignity is indivisible; it must necessarily be recognized in all, without distinction of any kind;

(ii) Human dignity is inalienable; no external force, no circumstance of life can strip a person of his dignity; only the individual himself can mistreat or surrender it;

(iii) Political action, the exercise of power, the implementation of the rights and responsibilities of individuals and communities all have as their ultimate objective the safeguarding of human dignity.

19. Human dignity, poverty, unemployment and alienation.

(i) There is no direct relationship between the material standard and conditions of living and human dignity; neither poverty nor material well-being nor affluence is incompatible with human dignity.

Until very recently, in certain cultures, those who were weak, useless or maladjusted were considered to deserve most attention. Those who had no place in society held the most important place in people's hearts and spirits. Today, the capitalist ethic is in conflict with traditional values. It tends to establish a link of causality between economic success and self-respect. Economic failure translates into a loss of personal dignity, and even of "national dignity". Poverty eradication and social and economic policies for standards of living must be based on a recognition of the human dignity of the poor, the weak and the humble. At the same time, the eradication of material and spiritual poverty is a duty. Poverty and deprivation are created by societies; they are not inevitable. The fact that there is no relationship between poverty and human dignity must in no way be used as a pretext for not improving living conditions.

(ii) Neither the unemployed nor those who lack job security should be deprived of their personal dignity.

A frightening trait of many cultures - ancient and modern - is that of associating different levels of dignity with a hierarchy of professions and activities. At the bottom of the totem-pole are, of course, adults who have never worked or have lost their jobs and cannot provide for their families. The "job" - not what he is or does - determines the individual's identity. One must have great courage and inner resources in order to resist the social and cultural pressure which strips the individual of his dignity when he is no longer "productive". At the international level, the dominant culture also tends to strip social groups and nations of their dignity when they do not contribute or no longer contribute to the growth and prosperity of the world economy. As with poverty eradication, the fight against unemployment and underemployment must begin with recognition of the dignity and value of all human labour, even if it is humble, insecure, "unprofitable" or unremmuerated.

(iii) Alienation or separation of the human being from his social milieu is all the more frequent as the paths to freedom and dignity grow narrower.

Integration or cohesion or social harmony is the capacity of human beings to live together in mutual respect, from the village community to the entire planet. The first prerequisite of this social harmony - very far from being a reality today and, in any case, ever fragile and in need of careful nurturing and cultivation - is recognition of the dignity of others. Racism and the insidious conviction that a given person, community or nation is marginal and will remain so are sources of alienation. Inequalities, when perceived and experienced as manifestations of a person's inferiority, are also sources of alienation, and there are many of these in today's world, where wealth is defined purely in material terms and where the gaps between "affluent" and "poor" are constantly increasing. Absolute poverty, defined as material deprivation, isolation, lack of hope and ultimately alienation, did not exist in communities and societies where charity and mutual assistance provided support and feeling of belonging. On the contrary, the societies of the contemporary world are characterized by isolation, marginalization and, hence, resentment, violence and crime. Another condition of social harmony is respect for diversity, or the recognition of a common humanity beyond differences in appearance and in culture. A calm and joyful celebration of human diversity, which is completely different from reticent and grudging acceptance of the relativism of opinions and customs, requires a spiritual foundation and shared values. In order to cease being predatory and become open to such a celebration of diversity, the dominant culture must become less predatory, less impatient and more spiritual. At both the individual level and the level of relations between States, humiliation injures dignity and self-respect. Humiliation also breeds violence and social disintegration.

20. Human dignity and respect for human rights.

Human rights, meaning the philosophy stemming from the Enlightenment, the product of many efforts throughout human history to limit the abuse of power and define relations between individuals and social institutions, the political

movement emphasizing the protection and promotion of individual rights, and the body of legal instruments which, particularly at the international level, defines a vast array of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, constitutes an essential element of the modern conscience. To reject, ignore or disparage human rights because they are part of a dominant culture that also contains aspects that are not conducive to social harmony would amount to promoting barbarism; to neglect those rights on the grounds that they are violated daily would amount to legitimizing it. The greatest danger to present and future civilizations would be for the human rights philosophy and instruments to be referred to ritually and gradually lose their political content. This philosophy and these instruments are based on the concept of human dignity. Thus it would be absurd and criminal to attempt to oppose a philosophy of human dignity with a philosophy of promotion of human rights. The complementarity between the two concepts can be summed up by several precepts:

(i) Human dignity is an absolute and a categorical imperative; it arises from ontology and spirituality; it should pervade minds, cultures and policies as air pervades our planet;

(ii) Human rights, which have more to do with ethics, law and politics, and whose respect can be verified and measured, constitute the preferred means of putting into practice the concept of human dignity;

(iii) Individual rights and responsibility for oneself, the other and the planet are indissociable; respect for rights and the exercise of responsibility are evidence of human dignity.

21. Human dignity and education.

The intellectual and spiritual renewal now in its infancy in various places in the world requires education to take a central role. Education is the key that allows a child to discover his intrinsic dignity. In order to play that role to the fullest, education - its systems, precepts and practices - should be based on very specific and demanding values. When knowledge about the ability to learn, the importance of moral precepts and rules of behaviour is transmitted with the respect and love which a person awakening to the world deserves, a child discovers or recovers the joy in living and growing surrounded by others and adults. The values transmitted through education are just as essential as, and inseparable from, the knowledge that is transmitted. The prevailing culture and spiritual atmosphere in educational institutions affect to a considerable degree the quality of the service rendered to the human community. The same is true of families, schools and universities, and the media. If, as some people believe, attacks on human dignity are increasingly frequent now, at the end of the twentieth century, these institutions are partly to blame. As for the media, freedom and independence of judgment should be informed and shaped by idealism and an ethic of honesty, kindness and respect for the human beings who "consume" information products with trust, interest and often eagerness. Like schools and families, the media have enormous duties and obligations with regard to respect for human dignity. The diversity of views and opinions which must be reflected in the press and television programmes is an essential contribution to the moral and intellectual enrichment of individuals.

22. Human dignity and quality of public services.

One of the ways in which political leaders and civil servants and agents who serve the public can promote human dignity is to take great care to establish healthy relations with their fellow citizens. Besides honesty and professional competence, a service ethic is essential. Whatever his social status and degree of vulnerability, a citizen should be considered a human being, and the need for a service, whatever it may be, does not make him dependent. Civility in human relations also arises from ethics and spirituality.

V. Self-interest and common good

23. It would seem that the cult of money, performance, and instant gratification mentioned above as characteristics of the spirit of the times that work against progress and social harmony also work against the quest for the common good, unless the latter is considered the automatic and morally neutral result of the forces at work at this moment in human history. But the common good cannot be morally neutral. It is neither the result of commercial transactions, nor the product of political strategies and balances, nor the cultural or moral trends of the moment, nor, precisely, the spirit of the times. It should be the fruit of deliberate efforts in all areas of human activity, whether economics, politics, culture, science, ethics or spirituality. The common good is both a state, which is always being renewed and transformed, and an aspiration. It is a practical necessity, in an era when humanity is "one" in its means of exchange and communications and is also "one" because it has the ability to destroy itself. It is a moral obligation, if one realizes that turning inward, towards one's community, nation or region, has no ethical justification or practical value. Today, the common good should be experienced and sought at the level of the most individual relationships and at the level of the future of all humanity.

24. In an era marked by interdependence and also by a certain fragmentation of human communities, what are the elements of the common good? Poverty reduction? A job for all who desire one? The elimination of all forms of discrimination, prejudice and the various forms of rejection of the other that mar humanity? Undoubtedly, and also peace, security and the reduction of the many threats that loom over the world at the end of the twentieth century. And finally, more joy and harmony, and an abundance of knowledge and spirit.

25. Individual interest, or self-interest is apparently easier to define, and also apparently easier to satisfy. If we look at the superficial common meaning, it means all that an individual hopes to be and to obtain and all that he wishes to have or invest for instant or deferred gratification. In fact, in no culture is self-interest considered totally selfish and limitless. There are objective curbs, such as the interests of close family, the limits imposed by ability, time and energy, and the need to allow for the fact that other individuals and groups are also free to pursue their own interests. There are also cultural and ethical curbs. Expressions such as "enlightened self-interest" suggest that calculation, reason or morality leads individuals - or groups and nations - to conceive and experience their interests with more

complexity than instinct might dictate. If this is indeed true, entering an indictment against a dominant culture that seemed overly concerned with pursuing individual interests to the point of forgetting the very concept of the common good would be a useful criticism, but somewhat inadequate. It would be more productive to show that the only way to reconcile personal interest and the common good is to give to the former a content and orientation that would transform it into a contribution to the latter. It is selfishness, egotism and egocentrism, rather than individualism, that are destructive. It is not the quest for more power or greater profits that is bad for the individual and society, but the motives for that quest, if they are dominated by vanity, the hunger for power or the desire to profit at the expense of others. It is not the desire to develop, improve and expand one's being, talents and abilities that can be seen as anti-social. On the contrary, and in contrast to narcissism, true individual progress is indivisibly connected to relationships with the other - the family, the community and all humanity - and with nature, the universe and the spiritual or divine whole. Individualism is an empty vessel that can be filled by good or evil. While the general interest can be simply the sum of selfish or short-term interests, the common good, by definition, has a normative content, and can only be the sum, plus "value added", of "enlightened self-interest" guided by common virtues, values and spirituality. Today, these spiritual virtues, values and demands should be drawn from all the religions and philosophies that have enriched humanity. This is not a middle-of-the-road or reductionist approach, nor a vague syncretism, but the quest for a common humanity.

26. A very important example for our times of the relationship between individual interests and the common good can be found in the world of economics and business. Major efforts are being made to promote social responsibility among companies and to introduce ethical dimensions in their strategies and policies. Aside from the question of honesty in financial dealings and product quality, a "company ethic" has various aspects and "targets". It may involve an ethic relating to the physical environment (pollution issues, working conditions, employee safety, for example), the buyers of its products (issues involving the physical or mental health of consumers), or even elements of the national or international community, for example the choice of an investment site or the decision to create or eliminate jobs in one region or another. These decisions and choices at various levels are not necessarily complementary and not automatically compatible. The dictates of ethics should be illuminated by a general philosophy of responsibility and the common good. Experience also supports moral principles in suggesting that the business ethic, in order to be lasting, must be implemented fully and consistently. Moreover, there is no simple and consistently positive relationship between the quality of the ethic and capacity for innovation; the latter disturbs structures, habits and ways of thinking. Virtue and change must constantly be reconciled, and change involves risk, including for the "established ethic". The same is true for societies as a whole. Virtue is often associated in people's minds with stability and conservatism. However, the spiritual leaders of all religions and philosophies have conceived and experienced their quest for perfection as an exhilarating and dangerous adventure. In the end, observations of the role of ethics in the life of companies show that there is no contradiction - indeed, there is often a positive relationship - between success in the conventional sense of profits and return on investment and success in terms of ethical requirements. The

entrepreneur who makes morally good decisions may do so based on principles and values that he has internalized and which inform his actions. He may be guided by the "enlightened self-interest" of his company. Again, the point is that there is not necessarily a contradiction between individual interests defined intelligently and morally and the common good. Honesty may be practised either out of virtue or because it is the best policy. It is possible to argue that there is a "social Darwinism": that the societies which observe such ethical principles as tolerance and solidarity are best able to survive.

27. All the major religions and philosophies have prescribed some form of balance between individual and collective interests. For example, the five elements constituting fundamental rights in Islam - the right to life, the right to property, the right to faith, the right to honour and the right to the authority of reason - must be carried out both individually and collectively. Thus, the tax by which the rich must help the poor is a religious duty towards the community before it is an individual act. Since it is channelled through the collective the recipient cannot feel humiliated.

28. In learning to become fully human, the individual finds both his personal identity and his place in the human community. This is a process, a difficult apprenticeship involving the heart and mind. The identity of the person, the self, is crucial, because it is there that selfishness must be defeated in order to make way for dignity and self-esteem. The family, which must also conquer its selfishness and power relationships, provides the environment for the human being to grow in goodness and love. The community is also essential for the full realization of the person because it teaches respect for the other. Individuals become fully human when they embody the spirit that defines humanity.

29. The key to the future lies in the search for human dignity and the common good. A new vision is necessary, which should focus once again on social action. The triumph of the self opens the way to dictatorship. There is also a need to draw up a new pedagogic conception of political action which would enable politicians to lead their citizens towards greater fulfilment. Political action requires the highest intellectual and moral integrity. This implies new standards for the evaluation of political action based on the verdict of men and history. All that degrades man is hateful.

30. This question of the relationship between the individual and the community, and between the interests of the individual - or of the group, class or nation - and the common good, is fundamental for societies to function and for the future of mankind. Once again, some thoughts in the form of precepts can no doubt be developed further.

(i) Individual interest, if selfishly and blindly pursued, is destructive for society and for the individual himself; all wealth implies social responsibility; the accumulation of wealth at the expense of others destroys the universal harmony;

(ii) Only individual improvement, guided by culture and spirituality, can make social progress possible;

(iii) The common good is not a lowest common denominator; on the contrary, mediocrity threatens contemporary societies; and the search for the common good must be guided by exceptional courage, virtue, intelligence and ability;

(iv) When the search for human dignity directs thought and action, there is a continuity, indeed an identity, between the individual interest and the common good.

VI. Enriching the discourse in the search for solutions to the three central themes of the Social Summit

31. A first requirement is at the level of language. Words and expressions which depersonalize relations between individuals and society and which, although unintentionally, are contrary to the concept of human dignity, should be avoided. This category includes expressions such as productive or non-productive persons or activities, human capital, human resources and the labour market. These expressions, and many others, have a technical meaning and are part of the logic of economics, but this logic becomes political and damaging when it enters the common language.

32. A second requirement relates to the tone of the discourse, and hence its philosophical assumptions. Especially when the objective is to bring back ethical and spiritual dimensions in political discourse, moderation is of the utmost importance. Emphasis is dangerous, even when the aim is to describe problems of the future. It is often preferable not to talk of "solutions" - as in the title of this item of the seminar's agenda - but rather of management, or consideration or study of a question or problem. Very often, it is necessary to resist the temptation to make hasty generalizations and to draw rapid and universal conclusions. Only common values and a common spirit - not behaviours, policies, ideas or certain norms - can be extended without intellectual and political arrogance and without damaging the richness of the human spirit. At all times, in the context of basic principles and guidelines, it is necessary to remember that there are various possibilities, various approaches, various solutions and various ideas about how societies should operate and progress. Respect for cultural differences and, indeed, the capacity for innovation in the social and political area require modesty and an open mind. The working assumptions referred to at the beginning of this report, namely that there is no perfect society, also explains this rejection of the "miracle theory" whether in respect of the "role of the market", "globalization" or "planning".

33. With regard to the need for a new ethic, or, at the very least, a renewal of moral and political philosophy, some characteristics of the discourse are of particular importance.

(i) With a few exceptions, which could be summarized in a short list of universal "commandments" derived from the concept of human dignity, it is undoubtedly preferable not to define absolute values; it is wiser to indicate clearly what is not acceptable and cannot be tolerated; the "golden rules", in general, refer to what should not be done.

(ii) The principles and values which are the most widely respected are least often stated because they are an integral part of culture and behaviours; the discourse on social progress must therefore concentrate on problems to be resolved and on the intellectual and moral approaches which are useful in finding solutions to them.

(iii) The spiritual dimension must be integrated into the discourse, must give it additional meaning, must enable it to reach the universal. The "spiritual" dimension cannot, of course, be juxtaposed with the political, economic or cultural dimension. It is an integral part of human and social reality. It gives the discourse its realism and truth.

(iv) A renewed ethic and spirituality must draw on all the sources of religions and philosophies which, by different routes but with striking similarities, extol mankind. This moral and spiritual renewal is a matter of urgency. It must be based on hope, not on fear. For example, the reactions to and rebellions against, certain forms of "globalization" are not signs of a wish to return to the past or of nostalgia, but portents of the future. They are new conceptions and new values which are emerging to save mankind. A new ethical dimension should make it possible to transcend the North/South dichotomy. A renewed spirituality must be global but diverse. It will help in rejecting a single model of social progress and going beyond simplistic solutions. It will counter materialism, the material dimension, not by rejecting it but by transcending it.

34. Enriching the discourse regarding the three main themes of the Social Summit may be briefly summarized as follows:

(i) Poverty

Poverty is material, but also spiritual; it consists of the absence of hope, boredom, solitude which is not sought but endured. It is, to a large extent, subjective, that is to say, it is what is experienced by the human being who is the "victim" of poverty. It would be better to talk of impoverishment rather than poverty. The most profound impoverishment is that of the spirit; however, it, too, can be reduced. A poor person is not only one who is hungry but also one who is oppressed, humiliated and manipulated. Reducing poverty means not only reducing inequalities and improving standards of living but also protecting and celebrating the magnificence of our planet, and adding beauty to it. More materialism is no answer to the problem of poverty. The ethic of egotism must be replaced by an ethic of kindness and care for others.

(ii) Employment, work

Effort, work, participation in creation, however humble, are at the heart of human nature and personal dignity. Ideally, for each person work should be what brings fulfilment and gives meaning and direction to daily life. Employment and work should benefit not only the individual but also the human community. It is one field in which individual interest and the common good can be in harmony.

(iii) Participation in the community and society, and their opposite, alienation

This participation, the source of social cohesion and of the integration of different individuals and groups in a harmonious whole, is both a right and a duty. There is a continuity between the humblest forms of participation - domestic work for example - and the most political forms. A society finds its identity not only through the way in which it treats its weakest members, but also the way it allows its ablest members to play a leading role. Isolation and self-absorption lead to alienation. The same is true of the hunger for power and lack of moderation. The intellectual and moral calibre of those who have the formidable privilege of directing the affairs of civic society helps mould the spirit of the times and the culture of a community. Only by resorting to the simplest and most basic values and virtues will mankind be able to find roads which have some degree of order. The discourse of the Social Summit should be a discourse of hope and a call for reflection. A philosophy of sharing and service must be encouraged and experienced. Sharing knowledge, culture and techniques means creating in common. Idealism is not a matter of dreams but of necessity.

35. To enrich the discourse of the Social Summit, a number of specific recommendations were also made during the seminar.

(i) There is a very urgent need to adopt measures, particularly at the international level, to ensure that the number of languages spoken in the world does not continue to decline as rapidly as it has during the past 20 years; an international convention should be envisaged, similar to the convention designed to protect biological diversity. Moreover, at Copenhagen, during the week of the Social Summit, a celebration of cultures that are in danger of disappearing or being marginalized should be organized. The maintenance of cultural and linguistic diversity is essential for mankind.

(ii) National systems of espionage and security involving the collection of information should be eliminated, again through an international agreement. These systems have been made obsolete by technological developments and constitute a danger for the democratic functioning of institutions.

(iii) Also at the international level, the competent institutions, and no doubt the United Nations itself, should consider the dangers involved in manipulating human beings through uncontrolled scientific developments fuelled by the lure of money and the lust for power. In particular, a "decade of the brain" could be envisaged.

(iv) Information, in all its forms, has considerable power today. This is a subject which deserves a summit comparable to the Copenhagen Summit.

(v) It would be useful to draw up an "international code of ethics" which would make it possible to prevent and combat the various forms of corruption which are a cancer in contemporary societies.

(vi) A concrete follow-up to the Social Summit should be to place social development higher in government priorities and hierarchies. This result, while modest in appearance, would in fact have a great impact on national and international policies and the spirit of the times.

36. Lastly, it was noted that the problems of our times were too serious to wait for elegant and complete "solutions". These problems require, instead, participation by everyone and joint efforts. Intermediate groups between the individual and the State, and civil society, have an essential role to play.

Appendix

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